

February 9, 2009

Hello,

I am Bruce Oscar. Please VOTE NO on Bill 6312 & 6313 – Raw Milk Sales and Testing.

I am the Assistant Manager at the Willimantic Food Co-op. We are a Natural Foods retail store located in Willimantic which is owned by over 5,000 members. I am here to represent the hundreds of customers who want to continue the convenience of being able to purchase raw milk products at our and many other retail stores. My customers are against this proposed legislation concerning raw milk.

I am here to encourage you to continue to allow the sales of liquid raw milk and raw milk products at all retail stores.

Currently I offer liquid raw milk from:

Foxfire Farm in Mansfield

Beltane Farm in Lebanon

Baldwin Brook Farm in Canterbury

I also sell raw milk cheese from

Cato Corner Farm in Colchester

Beltane Farm in Lebanon

Meadow Stone Farm in Brooklyn

This past year my sales of liquid raw milk totaled nearly 3,000 gallons from these farms. That quantity represents a significant amount of sales from my Dairy department. It is one of the top items I sell in this department.

In my cheese sales these Artisans alone provide over 2,000 pounds of cheese - at the ratio of 10 gallons of milk to make 1 pound of cheese - this equals 20,000 gallons of milk. This also is one of the top selling items in this department.

For a relatively modest sized store the sale of these products indicate that consumers want to purchase these raw milk products.

I have customers from near and far looking specifically for raw milk items. My customers are primarily from Eastern Connecticut, but they also come from around the state, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York. They are families, single people, young, old, and from a broad spectrum of economic and educational backgrounds.

After over 7 years of offering raw milk and raw milk cheeses I have not had one complaint or return due to the quality of these products, nor have I ever heard a report of illness from the consumption of these products.

Speaking on behalf of my customers I know that they would find it very inconvenient and virtually prohibitive to not have these raw milk products offered at the retail store level. Many would find the process of going to the farm a major hindrance to acquiring these items and would simply stop buying them.

For me, at the retail store level, this would have a considerable impact on my sales, not just in raw milk sales but the fact that customers buy other items while shopping for raw milk. My bottom line will suffer from this decision.

This legislation would be detrimental to the towns, to the state, to my customers, and to the consumers around the state that want to continue to have the convenience and the freedom of choice to purchase at many retail locations besides at the farm.

Most importantly, the ones that will suffer the greatest would be the farmers that would no longer be allowed to bring their products to market. This would reduce their sales, increase their costs, and possibly cause them to cease their operations as dairy farmers.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Bruce Oscar
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